



Marjorie Cook Foundation
Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

2201 Argonne Drive • Baltimore, Maryland 21218 • 410-554-8463 • dlennig@hruthmd.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HOUSE BILL 121

January 27, 2022

DOROTHY J. LENNIG, LEGAL CLINIC DIRECTOR

The House of Ruth Maryland is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House Bill 121, as amended, would require the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and the Judiciary to provide data concerning juvenile peace orders. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to amend and issue a favorable report on House Bill 121.**

The original bill as drafted struck DJS' role in juvenile peace orders and the Juvenile Court's jurisdiction over peace orders. Under current law, a victim of certain acts of abuse by a juvenile perpetrator can file a peace order against the perpetrator through DJS. This system was created because the District Court does not have jurisdiction over juveniles and therefore cannot enforce peace orders issued against juveniles, but the Circuit Court, which does have jurisdiction over juveniles, does not have jurisdiction to hear peace order cases. The ability to file a peace order against a juvenile through DJS closed this loophole. If the original version of HB 121 passed, and the juvenile peace order law repealed, victims of abuse at the hands of a juvenile perpetrator would have been left without a remedy and an important safety tool.

House of Ruth understands that there are concerns over the way DJS handles peace order cases against juveniles. However, the solution is to address those problems, not to strip victims of an important legal remedy and means of protection. HB 121, as amended, requires DJS and the Judiciary to report data about how many juvenile peace orders are filed, how many are forwarded to the courts, how many are granted and denied, how many are violated, and demographic information about the parties. This information will provide the necessary data to make improvements to the current juvenile peace order system.

The House of Ruth urges the House Judiciary Committee to amend and report favorably report on House Bill 121.